



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **Citrus longhorned beetles found in Tukwila**

OLYMPIA – Entomologists from the state Department of Agriculture today are searching for evidence of the highly destructive citrus longhorned beetle, and they're asking for your help. If you see one of these beetles, gently scoop it into a jar or other container and then call (800) 443-6684.

The search began Friday; a day after the owner of a nursery in Tukwila reported sighting what appeared to be Asian longhorned beetles to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Asian longhorned beetles have caused thousands of trees to be destroyed in Chicago and New York.

State and federal entomologists responded to the call. They caught three adult citrus longhorned beetles last Friday. They also found nine exit holes on Japanese maples at the nursery, indicating more beetles are on the loose. It is the first time the beetle has been found in Washington.

The citrus longhorned beetle is closely related to the Asian longhorned beetle. And, it is just as destructive. Whole forests could be destroyed if the beetle is allowed to establish itself in this country.

The Japanese maples were imported from Korea. The entire shipment of 369 trees has been destroyed. The trees were in the eighth month of a two-year long disease quarantine to ensure they were healthy before they could be sold to retail outlets or the public.

State and federal entomologists will be inspecting trees in the immediate area for eggs, or damages to leaves and bark that would indicate adult beetles have been feeding. The state and federal departments of agriculture are also discussing methods that can be used to prevent the beetles from becoming established in this state.

"Fortunately, we're ready," said Brad White, managing entomologist at the state Department of Agriculture. "We've been gearing up for this fight for more than two years. One entomologist got

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firsthand knowledge of longhorned beetle control measures in Chicago, and several of us are trained to safely climb trees to observe beetle damage, which is best seen from the top down.”

There are several species of longhorned beetles. They are considered serious orchard pests in Asia. They represent an even larger threat to trees in this country where they have no natural enemies.

Females may lay as many as 200 eggs individually, not in egg masses, beneath the bark on the lower portion of the trunk or exposed roots of trees. The eggs hatch into larvae, large worm-like grubs that feed on wood within the tree. Larvae grow up to about 2 inches long and nearly ½ inch wide and then emerge as adult beetles.

Adult beetles are 2-½ inches-long and they fly. They attack a wide range of living hardwood trees and a few conifers. They are most fond of bark of maple, alder and poplar trees. Gradually they kill most trees by boring large holes throughout the heartwood of the tree during the insect’s larval stage.

Since the New York and Chicago Asian longhorned beetle infestations were linked to wooden pallets and other wood packing materials, USDA requires those materials to be treated before entering the U.S. More recently, several species of longhorned beetles are hitchhiking to this country from Asia in bonsai nursery stock.

Asian longhorned beetle is one of the potentially harmful insects monitored by the state Department of Agriculture, which has primary responsibility for protecting people, agriculture and the environment from exotic and invasive pests. Whole forests could be destroyed if the beetle were allowed to establish itself in this country.

To date, only two adult Asian longhorned beetles have been found in Washington. One was found in 1997 on pallets at a business near Marysville. The other was discovered in 1998 at a utility in Bellingham. In each case, only one live beetle was found so there was little chance that they could have established populations here.

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